

Assessment of the Effect of Communal Conflict on Element At Risk In Rivers And Bayelsa State In The Niger Delta, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Communal conflict is a very serious hazard in Nigeria. Many people are losing their lives every day but it's not recognized as a disaster unlike the conventional hazards of floods, earthquakes and volcanoes. The study examined the risk assessment of communal conflicts in Rivers and Bayelsa States in Nigeria. The study employed cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs. A sample size of 400 for each State was determined through Taro Yamane formula for the questionnaire administration. Data collection was achieved through administration of questionnaires to the residents, and archived secondary data from the Nigeria Police and relevant State Ministries. The study employed descriptive tools such as percentages, frequency, tables and maps for analysis. Findings reveal that the effects of conflict on the element at risk in the study area were mostly in terms of losses suffered by the communities' socio-economic factors that are, destructive to lives and other areas of human endeavors which includes poverty 79% Bayelsa and 77% Rivers respondent, literacy level 74% of Bayelsa and 78% of Rivers, livelihood 75% of Bayelsa and 55% of Rivers, inequality 70% for Bayelsa and 71% for Rivers, farming activities 60% of Rivers and 74% of Bayelsa, and crude oil production 42% ME, 27% LE, 13% NE, 12% HE, and 7% VHE of Bayelsa while Rivers respondents claimed 46% was on HE, 33% ME, 12% VHE, and 6% LE respectively, in the study area. Unemployment and poverty in the study area created breeding grounds for criminal activities 82% and 75% respectively. The effect of communal conflict have done more harm than good and as such it needs proactive approach in mitigating it. The study recommends that government and all relevant agencies in community affairs and risk assessment bodies should be proactive and resilience in the management of communal conflicts.

Date of Submission: 10-06-2021

Date of Acceptance: 25-06-2021

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is experiencing different kind of disasters which range from natural namely volcanoes, earthquakes, flood, tsunamis and manmade which includes chemicals spills transport accidents and conflicts. The frequencies and intensities of these natural and man-made disasters vary as a result of developmental, environmental, and human induced changes in the world. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011). Most of these changes are transforming into disasters in some countries and continents, which conflict is among the most prevalent disasters in the world. As a result of its political, economic, religious and other reasons attached to it. Violent conflict is thriving as a major developmental challenge which can lead to loss of lives and properties destroy infrastructure and can cripple economic activities. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2011).

Africa as a continent is affected by this disasters and many persons lose their lives, and properties when compared to other areas in the world. Apart from the conventional disasters caused by floods, earthquakes and volcanoes, the continent also suffers from other disasters namely conflicts, drought, poverty, illness and hunger. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2001). Disaster in the continents of Africa is changing from traditional disasters to the modern disasters of conflicts, viral diseases, terrorism, ethnicity global warming and Environmental pollution. The high migration of people due to conflicts displacement might bring about the likelihood of serious outbreak of fatal disease occurrence, for instance swine flu that caused some problems in most developed countries. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2001). Africa is seen as one of the most disaster risk-prone continents that are associated with weak development status. The vulnerable victims are mainly communities living below poverty datum line. The poor people are the most susceptible to these disasters because they have limited resources and capacity to prevent or cope with the impacts. This factor significantly aids their vulnerability (Tichaona, 2009).

Today's conflicts have mutated into complex systems that are driven by multiple and competing interests. These conflict dynamics have the potential to generate considerable and lasting turbulence across

political and socio-economic spheres, undermining peace and sustainable development. A deeper understanding of the drivers of unrest and conflict and the capacities for peace in an ever-changing world is crucial for UNDP to identify and support national capacities in sustaining peace. Conflict analysis provides an evidence base to enable strategic and targeted responses to better manage new forms of transition and turbulence, and reduce the likelihood of a (re-)emergence of violent conflict. Sound analysis is not only central to understanding the causes and drivers of conflict, indigenous capacities for peace, and key stakeholders, but it is also critical to developing strategic approaches for the UN system to comprehensively support national efforts to address conflicts and protect development gains. (UNDP,2019). Risk assessment is a process to determine the nature and extent of such risk, by analyzing hazards and evaluating existing conditions of vulnerability that together could potentially harm exposed people, property, services, livelihoods and the environment on which they depend (Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, 2015) A comprehensive risk assessment not only evaluates the magnitude and likelihood of potential losses but also provides full understanding of the causes and impact of those losses. Risk assessment, therefore, is an integral part of decision and policy-making processes and requires close collaboration among various parts of society (UNDP, 2010). This conflict assessment cannot take place in a vacuum but requires the environment where we live with the risk associated with conflict unknown to some of us of its potential danger.

A community is a functionally related aggregate of people who live in a particular geographical locality at a particular time, show a common culture, and are arranged in a social structure, exhibit an awareness of their uniqueness and separate identity as a group (Umar, 2011). Global and internal experiences have revealed that there abound to be diversity in opinion and issues as regards an area experiencing conflicts. The world has witnessed unprecedented conflicts which Africa is among. Conflicts have been experienced in countries such as Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Taylor, 2008). Asiyanbola (2007) asserted that different areas in Africa have experienced continuous dysfunctional conflicts, existing within communities, and different groups. However, Nigeria has been affected by different types of conflicts that have claimed the lives of many people and displaced them from their geographical communities (Alimba, 2014). Ajayi (2014) describe conflict as a condition in which some identifiable group of human beings, whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, religious, socio-political, economic, cultural is in conscious opposition to one or more identifiable human groups due to the fact that these groups are pursuing goals that are incompatible.

Communal conflicts are conflicts between individuals of a particular group that their totality of involvement is defined by the group and any action or thought that contravenes or threatens the group identity would be resisted drastically (Ojie et al. 2014). Conflict causes changes in the society and this changes can prevent society from attaining basic needs such as livelihood, access to water, food, shelter and others, which increases the vulnerability and risk of the inhabitants residing in the area. Vulnerabilities is a set of prevailing or consequential conditions resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors, which increase the sustainability of a community to the impact of hazards (ISDR 2002 cited in Roxanal, 2013). It can comprise of physical, socio-economic, environmental or political factors that adversely affect the ability of communities to respond to events (Jegillos, 1999). Blaike et al (1994 as cited in Roxanal, 2013) is of the opinion that vulnerability is the characteristics of person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a hazard and risk which is regarded as the probability of an event and its negative consequences (Roxana,2013).

The Socio-economic Development of Africa have being impacted negatively because development cannot thrive in an environment constantly witnessing violence, instability and insecurity (Isaac et al.,2016).Some of these impacts are unemployment, poverty, and problem of reconstruction, death and loss of lives, displacement, and humanitarian crisis (Isaac et al., 2016).

The effects of conflicts on the socio-economic livelihood of the inhabitants in the country or community has led to reduction of revenue being experienced as a result taxes, charges collected by government agencies for developmental purposes are scarcely generated . (Onyeiwu,2004) and Loss of human lives which reduces the agile work force as a result of casualties witnessed during the conflict period for instance the Boko Haram, the Niger Delta Militants (Onyeiwu, 2004, Dunmoye, 2013). Also Foreign investment inflow will reduce as a result of violent conflicts(Irobi, 2005) in addition the commercial activities receives low patronage in the areas where this conflict occurs (Dashit, Gwom and Dabo, 2015). Similarly Psychological instability which signifies constant flash back, nightmares, Anxiety, depression or post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are attributes associated with conflict areas. Beaton and Murphy (2006).Risk associated with communal conflicts as a result of elements being put at risk in this communities has subjected human beings to untold suffering, economic losses, physical losses, social losses, environmental loses, deprivation, and humiliation, destitution and other menace of life which necessitated scholars like Anikpo,(2015), Omatayo (2005), Peterside (2007),Wosu (2011), to carry out studies on communal conflicts. Communal conflicts in Rivers and Bayelsa lead to massive destruction of lives and properties as well as disruption of social, political and economic lives of

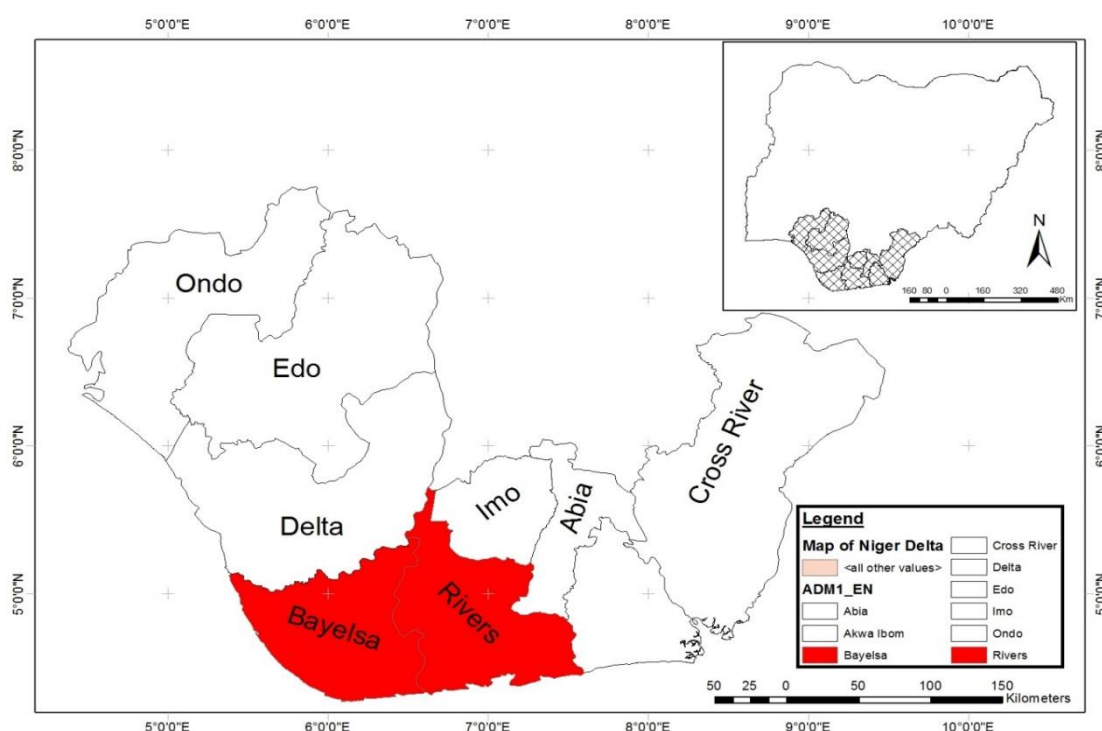
the larger population (Omatayo 2005). This is especially so when these conflicts are between supposed kindred within or between the communities in the LGA. However, in spite of all government efforts at the resolution of the conflicts, they appear to have become difficult to control. Considering the occurrence of conflicts and occasional state failure in the maintenance of peace and order in Nigeria generally, and in Rivers and Bayelsa states, it is probable that their exist factors, issues, challenges that need to be interrogated to unravel the nature of the problem. It is based on this view that this work tend to assess the effects of communal conflicts on elements at risk in Rivers and Bayelsa State.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

STUDY AREA

Location and extent

The study was carried out in Rivers and Bayelsa States. These states lie in Longitudes between $5^{\circ} 20' 0''$ E and $7^{\circ} 25' 0''$ E; and Latitudes between $4^{\circ} 0' 0''$ N and $8^{\circ} 26' 1''$ N. Niger Delta region is located in the Gulf of Guinea between longitude 5° E to 8° E and latitudes 5° N to 6° N. It is bounded at the east by Cross River, Anambra, Imo, Abia States and at the west by Ogun and Osun States and at the north by Ekiti, Kogi, States.



The area has low relief and poor ground drainage and is underlain by soft, young sedimentary rocks, gently undulating plains. These plains become waterlogged in rainy season (Udo, Ajayi, Kirk-Greene & Falola, 2017). According to NDDC (2006), the nature of the terrain and available dry land, determines the pattern of settlement in the Region. Most settlements comprise largely rural communities. The study area has two ecological zones: the mangrove forest and coastal zone and the Freshwater Swamp forest zone. The Mangrove forest and coastal zone consist of saltwater inundation. Acid sulphate, silty clay, clay loam and peat (Chikoko) soils are dominant in this zone. The soil is saline and has almost neutral pH when wet but when uncovered and dry, the sulphides become oxidized to sulphuric acid. Then the soil becomes very acidic with pH 3 and incapable to support vegetation (Aberé & Ekeke, 2011). Bayelsa State and Rivers State has a land mass of 11,007 and 10,378 with a population of 1,710,000 and 4,858,000 as at 1999 respectively. It is expected therefore that population of the area will increase to between 3,2106,000 and 9,1212,000 based on projections of 2018, Amangabara and Obenade (2015).

Rivers and Bayelsa States enjoy atropical rainforest climate. They experience regular rainfalls and warm temperatures (National Geographic Society, 2017). Theyhas two seasons, a wet and dry season. The wet season last between 7-8 months; from March to October with a brief break in rainfall usually in the month of August. The dry season usually starts from November and ends in February.

Rivers and Bayelsa States in the Niger Delta are described as being a “rich region with poor peoplebut they are blessed with abundant Crude Oil and Natural Gas, which is the main stay of Nigeria’s economy(Omofonmwa&Odia, 2009).

The region is endowed with both renewable and non-renewable natural resources. The major non-renewable resources include fossil fuels, crude oil and natural gas and construction materials such as gravel, sand, clay and earth. Sand is obtained from both land and river beds.(Niger Delta Development Master Plan, 2016).

Sampling technique

This study employed the cross-sectional research design and longitudinal research design based on detailed information on conflict issues and the length of years being assessed. The study population comprises of the entire population of the upland communities with cases of communal conflict in the study area.Stratified Random Sampling techniques was used to select Local Government area, this in line with Oyegun, (2013) From the two states, upland LGAs with communal conflict cases were used for this study. This gave a total of eleven (11) LGAs for this study. All the communities with communal conflict cases were used for the study, Taro Yamane sampling size technique was applied to give a sample size of 400 for each of the States.Data for this work were from both primary and secondary source. The primary data were obtained from the field specifically from structured questionnaire, field observation and in depth Interviews while the secondary source were from Information from gazette newspapers, journals, reports, National Population Census Reports, Local Governments Areas, Security agencies and other relevant bodies and this data were reviewed and analyzed accordingly.

III. RESULTS

Effect of Conflict on Element at Risk

Table 1:Participants opinion on the effect of conflict on elements at risk

S/N	Socio-Economic Factors	Total per State	Response Categories									
			Very High Extent		High Extent		Moderate Extent		Less Extent		No Extent	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Poverty	Bayelsa=339	164	48%	106	31%	44	13%	25	7%		0%
		Rivers=371	112	30%	173	47%	75	20%	9	2%	2	1%
2	Literacy	Bayelsa=339	65	19%	188	55%	67	20%	19	6%		0%
		Rivers=371	73	20%	214	58%	49	13%	21	6%	14	4%
3	Livelihood	Bayelsa=339	55	16%	199	59%	53	16%	14	4%	18	5%
		Rivers=371	66	18%	101	27%	183	49%	21	6%		0%
4	Unemployment	Bayelsa=339	159	47%	109	32%	48	14%	23	7%		0%
		Rivers=371	115	31%	212	57%	31	8%	13	4%		0%
5	Inequality	Bayelsa=339	81	24%	156	46%	78	23%	21	6%	3	1%
		Rivers=371	148	40%	116	31%	78	21%	29	8%		0%
6	Displacement	Bayelsa=339	17	5%	31	9%	166	49%	125	37%		0%
		Rivers=371	41	11%	211	57%	93	25%	26	7%		0%
7	Farming activities	Bayelsa=339	33	10%	41	12%	82	24%	171	50%	12	4%
		Rivers=371	28	8%	192	52%	133	36%	18	5%		0%
8	Crude oil Production	Bayelsa=339	23	7%	39	12%	142	42%	92	27%	43	13%
		Rivers=371	44	12%	172	46%	122	33%	23	6%	10	3%
9	Others	Bayelsa=339	18	5%	15	4%	178	53%	87	26%	41	12%
		Rivers=371	50	13%	37	10%	96	26%	169	46%	19	5%

The effects of Conflict on the element at risk in the study area are mostly in terms of losses suffered by the communities’ socio-economic factors that are, destructive to lives and other areas of human endeavors. 79% of Bayelsa and 77% of Rivers respondents claimed poverty was on very high extent (VHE), High Extent (HE). Literacy attracted percentage responses of very high extent (VHE) and high extent (HE) of 74% of Bayelsa and 78% of Rivers respondents which is an indication that the effect of conflict on Literacy was high. 75% of Bayelsa respondents reported that the effect of conflict on Livelihood was on HE while 55% of Rivers claimed it was (ME). The percentage responses of VHE and HE of Bayelsa and Rivers respondents attracted 79% Bayelsa and 88% Rivers which mean an increase in unemployment as a result of the conflict. Data on inequality

indicated 70% for Bayelsa and 71% for Rivers respondents indicating very high extent (VHE) and high extent (HE) for both Bayelsa and Rivers participants. Also, 68% of Rivers respondents claimed the effect of conflict was on very high extent (VHE) and high extent (HE) which means they were displaced as a result of the conflict while their Bayelsa counterpart claimed it was moderate extent (ME) which attracted 86%. On farming activities, 60% of Rivers respondents reported high extent (HE) while 74% of Bayelsa claimed that the effect was moderate extent (ME). The view of Bayelsa respondents on Crude oil production show thus: 42% ME, 27% LE, 13% NE, 12% HE, and 7% VHE while Rivers respondents claimed 46% was on HE, 33% ME, 12% VHE, and 6% LE respectively. Finally, the effect of conflict on other areas in Bayelsa attracted high percentage responses of 53% for ME, 26% for LE, 12% for NE, 5% for VHE, and 4% for HE respectively. The results of the study show that conflict increases unemployment, poverty, and the people's livelihood in the study area and create breeding grounds for criminal activities. The results show that an increase in the unemployment rate by conflict was ranked highest (82%) by the respondents followed by poverty (75%) and livelihood of some areas (73%) in that order. 70% of the respondents claimed that the conflict affected their farming activities in the area. For other respondents, the conflict disrupted their day-to-day Crude Oil Production, business activities, and by extension their overall income. There was also a loss of foodstuff and food reserves. Other respondents claimed that beyond the damages, the conflict had positive effects. These positive effects include increasing the literacy level of the people.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the opinion of the respondents on the effect of conflict on socio-economic characteristics. It was revealed that there is a significant difference in the opinions of the respondents. It was agreed that the effects of Conflict on the element at risk in the study area were mostly in terms of losses suffered by the communities' socio-economic factors that are, destructive to lives and other areas of human endeavors which includes poverty, Literacy level, Livelihood, Inequality, farming activities and Crude oil production in the study areas. Unemployment, poverty in the study area creates breeding grounds for criminal activities.

The finding is in line with Nyborg et al. (2012) who noted that the effect of community conflict included limited access to the market due to security checkpoints, psychological stress, and continued fear, and insecurity limits participation in recovery activities (particularly women). Also, the DFID report of 1997 as quoted by Bassey (2007) submitted that conflict generates social division, reverses economic progress; impedes sustainable development, human rights violation, and large population movements from the region. The effects of community conflict may be felt in the neighboring communities socially and economically. Obasanjo (2004) reported that neighboring states have their economies and social life disrupted and dislocated by the influx of internally displaced persons. Findings revealed that more than 70% of respondents agreed that community conflict affected education in different dimensions ranging from closing down the schools or low attendance of pupils/students in schools. The findings are in agreement with Sany (2010) reporting that conflict results in destroyed infrastructure, displaced students and teachers, and school closures. Justino (2014) also reported that conflict is associated with the destruction of infrastructure and resources needed to maintain functioning education systems; the breakdown of communities as a result of people fleeing areas of violence, which affects how children are educated and under which circumstances; and the distributional and equity effects in terms of who accesses which type of education that may prevent many from attending school. There was also a loss of foodstuff and food reserves. Other respondents claimed that beyond the damages, the conflict had positive effects. These positive effects include increasing the literacy level of the people.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communal conflict as a contemporary issues is an inevitable situation that our present day society cannot run away from and as such there must be a way to live with it, manage and as well as mitigate and develop community resilience. The work was able to highlight some of the effects of communal conflicts on element at risk in the study area and recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Each community should consider creating a conflict awareness and preparedness committee. The members of this committee should be conversant with conflict management.
2. The government should incorporate conflict management courses and training into the academic sector.
3. The government and all relevant agencies in community affairs and risk assessment bodies should be proactive and resilience in the management of communal conflicts.

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Nwakanma, C. Christian, et. al. "Assessment of the Effect of Communal Conflict on Element At Risk Inrivers And Bayelsa State In The Niger Delta, Nigeria." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 26(06), 2021, pp. 03-08.